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## Forward Together Update - Expanded Testing Criteria

University of Northern Iowa

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# University of Northern Iowa

## Forward Together Update - Expanded Testing Criteria

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Dear Panther Community,

As we continue to enhance testing capabilities, effective immediately students, faculty and staff can call the Student Health Clinic COVID-19 hotline, 319-273-2100, to schedule their testing appointment, **whether they have symptoms or not**. On Tuesday, February 9, 2021, the Iowa Department of Public Health eliminated PCR testing criteria for SARS-CoV-2 at the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL). SHL will now accept any PCR detection test for COVID-19 infection ordered by a healthcare provider **with no restrictions**.

### *CDC research on masks*

While wearing any mask reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19, the CDC announced yesterday that wearing a tightly fitted mask can dramatically reduce that risk.

The [CDC study](#) found that the risks can be reduced by more than 95% if both an infected person and one without the virus wore tightly fitted masks. The study underlined the importance of wearing a mask with at least two layers that covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly around your chin.

Correctly wearing masks will only become more important as a more-infectious British variant of COVID-19 is expected to become the dominant strain in the U.S. by March.

### *Valentine's Day*

Valentine's Day is Sunday and we wanted to again urge those celebrating to follow CDC guidelines for holidays or other such gatherings. While COVID-19 case numbers are dropping locally and across the state, the risk of spreading the coronavirus remains high and we wish to keep our campus community safe.

The safest way to celebrate the holiday is with people in your household or gathering virtually, [according to the CDC](#). Sending a card or gift is another safe way to show you care.

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If spending time with people you don't live with, wearing a mask, remaining 6 feet apart and avoiding crowded, poorly ventilated spaces helps reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. For those who don't mind the cold or want to snowshoe, sled or hike, gathering outdoors is safer than indoors, the CDC says.

If you have a question, please visit [forwardtogether.uni.edu](https://forwardtogether.uni.edu) or email it to [forwardtogether@uni.edu](mailto:forwardtogether@uni.edu). Thanks for all that you do to keep yourself, your family and the Panther community safe.

Stay Well,

John Vallentine,  
Associate Provost for Faculty

Joseph Rayzor,  
Director of Risk Management, Environmental Health and Safety